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S E C R E T MANILA 002889

SIPDIS

NOFORN

STATE FOR EAP/PMBS, INR/EAP
NSC FOR GREEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/24/2015
TAGS: PTER PINS PREL MOPS ID RP
SUBJECT: MILF COVERTLY MOVING AGAINST HIGH VALUE TERRORIST
TARGETS?

REF: MANILA 2785

Classified By: Political Officer Joseph Saus
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (MILF-AHJAG) official (and International Visitor Leadership Program nominee) Mike Pasigan (strictly protect) told poloff June 24 that the MILF is covertly mobilizing its forces in a "non-combat" effort to locate (and hopefully capture) suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) key targets in MILF areas. The operation should take place over the next week, and has a 50-percent chance of success, according to Pasigan. Pasigan clarified that the operation comes at the direct order of MILF Chairman Al Haj Ibrahim Murad and that the action required the "utmost secrecy." Even MILF Base Commanders are out of the loop, due to Murad's concern that some continue to hide and/or protect these elements, he claimed. Pasigan said the primary motivation for the mission was to demonstrate the importance the MILF placed on its stated commitment against terrorism.

¶2. (S/NF) Comment. MILF officials have claimed for months that they are willing to take positive steps to move against terrorists in their zones, while often simultaneously claiming that there are none. Any true efforts, especially successful, will be important in stimulating momentum in the peace process and in isolating individual MILF commanders who may harbor such terrorists. We have indicated repeatedly and forcefully that the time has long come for the MILF firmly and decisively to move against terrorism, and to make the choice toward peace and development, with action rather than verbiage. While little in the MILF's track record so far justifies much optimism, the faster pace and more collaborative tone of the two most recent GRP/MILF "exploratory" talks may indicate the possibility of a sea change, or at least its beginning.

BELLARD